AQA A Level Psychology

To inspire students with a love of Psychology by developing their understanding of complex human behaviour, equipping them with knowledge, critical-thinking skills and empathy, and empowering them to apply psychological thinking to themselves, others and the wider world.

The Psychology curriculum equips our students with a rich knowledge of the range of uses psychology has in the real world. It equips them with an understanding of the role that biological factors, learned experiences and thought processes all have in complex human behaviours.

As part of the curriculum, or psychology students will get to learn;

- Where psychology began, and the methods that have been developed and evaluated over time.
- The range of approaches when attempting to understand behaviour, understanding that one size does not fit all when explaining complex human behaviour.
- Critical thinking skills in order to assess the success of a method, theory or therapy.
- The impact of advances in science and therapies within psychology.
- The variety of causes of mental illness and giving insights into behaviours they may experience in themselves and others.

Through learning these concepts and developing a large base of psychology knowledge, our students will develop a love for psychology which will encourage them to learn more about it as they enter the wider world.

Why study Psychology at The Sixth Form at Ridgewood?

- Psychology offers an insight into the human brain, mind and behaviour, helping you to develop yourself and your relationships with others
- The course covers a variety of disciplines within the subject, making it interesting and unique and applicable to many different university courses
- Previous students have gone on to study a variety of subjects at university including psychology, educational studies, teaching, business studies, sport, English, politics, social work and nursing
- At Ridgewood the psychology department are specialists in teaching Psychology at post-16, with many years of experience and exam expertise
- Current students enjoy the course because of the variety of different areas of psychology, and because they feel valued and respected by their teachers
- If you are looking to have a career of any kind working with other people then Psychology is a perfect choice

What topics will I study in this subject?

Topic	What this means
Approaches in psychology	An approach is a perspective or view that involves certain assumptions about human behaviour: the way they function, which aspects of them are worthy of study and what research methods are appropriate for undertaking this study. You will study learning theory (behaviourism); cognitive approach; biological approach; psychodynamic approach and the humanistic approach.
Research methods	A wide range of research methods are used in psychology. These methods vary by the sources from which information is obtained, how that information is sampled, and the types of instruments that are used in data collection. Methods also vary by whether they collect qualitative data, quantitative data or both.
Scientific processes	Psychologists use the scientific method to conduct their research. The scientific method is a standardised way of making observations, gathering data, forming theories, testing predictions, and interpreting results. You will become familiar with a full range of methods and techniques, and be able to justify design choices.
Data handling and analysis	After psychologists develop a theory, form a hypothesis, make observations, and collect data, they end up with a lot of information, usually in the form of numerical data. The term 'statistics' refers to the analysis and interpretation of this numerical data. You will know when and how to use a range of statistical tests and be able to state whether results are significant and why.
Attachment	Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. The attachment experience affects personality development, particularly a sense of security, and research shows that it influences the ability to form stable relationships throughout life. You will study different types of parent/infant attachments; theories of attachment; animal studies; cases where attachment has been interrupted or has not formed at all and how early attachments impact relationships in later life.
Clinical Psychology and Mental Health	The study of mental illness or mental distress or the manifestation of behaviours and experiences which may be indicative of mental illness or psychological impairment. You will study different definitions of, and analyse the issues with defining, abnormality. You will apply the approaches to explain phobias, depression and OCD and evaluate the effectiveness in treating people with these disorders.
Social influence	Social influence is the change in behaviour that one person causes in another, intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of the way the changed person perceives themselves in relationship to the influencer, other people and society in general. In particular you will study majority and minority influence; reasons for conformity; reasons why people obey authority and why people conform to social roles.
Memory	Memory is the term given to the structures and processes involved in the storage and subsequent retrieval of information. You will learn two models of memory and their associated issues; identify and explain why we forget things; look into cases of eye witness testimony and the police cognitive interview technique.
Biopsychology	You will study the divisions of the nervous system; the structure and function of neurons; the process of synaptic transmission; the endocrine system; localisation of function in the brain; Broca's and Wernicke's areas; split brain research; plasticity and functional recovery; ways of studying the brain; and biological rhythms.

Issues and debates	The key issues and debates include gender and culture in psychology; free will and determinism; the nature-nurture debates; idiographic and nomothetic approaches and ethical issues and social sensitivity.
Relationships	Here you will learn about the factors affecting romantic relationships including; attraction, reasons for relationship success and struggle, reasons for relationship breakdown. You will also learn about online relationships, catfishing and stalking behaviour associated with celebrities and the reasons behind this.
Schizophrenia	Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness characterised by incoherent or illogical thoughts, bizarre behaviour and speech, and delusions or hallucinations, such as hearing voices. Schizophrenia typically begins in early adulthood. You will study the symptoms of schizophrenia; biological and psychological explanations and treatments for the disorder.
Forensic Psychology	Forensic psychology is concerned with the biological and psychological explanations for offending behaviours. Within this topic, theories on innate personality types or learned behaviours from the environment will be studied to try and understand why people break the law and how they can be rehabilitated.

What skills will I need in this subject?

Skill	**What this skill involves in this subject**
Knowledge and memory recall	In Psychology you must learn many different theories and pieces of research and be able to recall these in an exam.
Application of knowledge	Some of the exam questions in Psychology require you to apply your knowledge of psychology to new scenarios.
Evaluation	You are required to consider the advantages and disadvantages of research methods as well as consider practical applications, ethical issues and debates in research and psychological theory.
Mathematics	Research methods are a key theme in the psychology course and you will be required to show competency in mathematics and statistics.

Entry Requirements

Maths	**Science**
Level 5 at GCSE	**Level 5 at GCSE**

What will my lessons involve?

- Understanding the use of research methods and evaluating their use.
- Accessing and reading psychological material independently.
- Use of subject specific psychological terminology.
- Critical thinking and developing lines of argument and drawing conclusions.
- Problem solving /analytic /application skills
- Creative transformation skills (presenting information in a variety of ways).

What will my independent study involve?

- Flipped learning (reading materials and researching online in preparation for your lesson)
- Essay plans and revision resources, seeking resources online
- Creating your own testing materials for self-assessment
- Exam questions (self-marked using mark-schemes to familiarise yourself with examiner requirements)

How will I be assessed?

Percentage exam assessment: 100%	Percentage coursework assessment: 0%

Assessment	**Details of assessment**
Paper 1: Introductory topics in Psychology	2 hours, 96 marks, a variety of short and long answers ranging from 1 to 16 marks. Topics covered are Social influence, Memory, Attachment and Clinical Psychology and mental health
Paper 2: Psychology in context	2 hours, 96 marks, a variety of short and long answers ranging from 1 to 16 marks. Topics covered are Approaches, Biopsychology and Research methods.
Paper 3: Issues and options in Psychology	2 hours, 96 marks, a variety of short and long answers ranging from 2 to 16 marks. Topics covered are Issues and debates, Forensic psychology, Relationships and Schizophrenia.

How do I know this is the right course for me?

- You will be required to spend a minimum of six hours per week studying and practicing your knowledge outside of lessons to be successful in completing the Psychology course
- This course will suit students who are well organised, enjoy reading and are proficient in essay writing skills. Due to the density of new information and pace of lessons, it is expected that you will communicate with your teachers if you feel you need additional help or resources to practice with.
- If you are looking for a career working with, caring for, or collaborating with other people, this is the right course for you.

